

THE Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

GuideStone reveals new enrollment guidelines

DALLAS (BP) — GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention has announced new enrollment guidelines in which churches and ministries eligible to offer GuideStone's medical Personal Plans will be able to add new employees and their families within 60 days of employment, effective July 1.

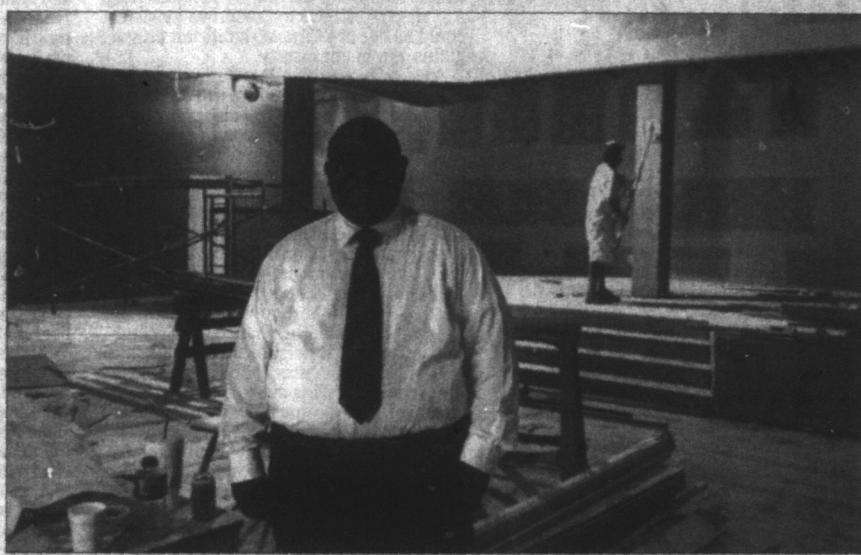
For the first half of 2014, due to the uncertainties in the health care market as a result of the Affordable Care Act, GuideStone imposed temporary guidelines that limited enrollment to participants experiencing federally-defined HIPAA special enrollment events such as marriage, birth, adoption, or loss of coverage.

Under the new guidelines, new employees of an eligible Personal Plan church or ministry can enter the health plan within 60 days of employment or HIPAA special enrollment event. Also, church employees who began their employment between Jan. 1 and July 1, 2014, may enroll themselves and eligible family members through Aug. 1.

"The Affordable Care Act has created unprecedented changes and challenges for all health plans, including church health plans," GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said. "GuideStone has been diligently seeking legislative, regulatory and judicial recognition of the unique nature and needs of church plans, with the continued goal of keeping the plan strong and stable."

"At the same time, GuideStone continues to explore ways of providing coverage to new enrollees in a manner consistent with that goal. GuideStone has determined that this change will enable us to balance ministry objectives with good stewardship."

For more information, contact GuideStone toll-free at (888) 984-8433.



OPENING SOON — Jonathan Tucker, pastor of New Birth Community Church in New Albany, inspects ongoing construction work in what will soon be the sanctuary of the church. The building, at times a shirt and furniture manufacturing facility, was recently purchased by the church and is slated to open in August. (Photo by Tony Martin)

God providing vision for church's growth

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

New Albany pastor Jonathan Tucker had a vision some years ago that God would provide a way for New Birth Community Church to come to own the property adjacent to his existing church.

The building was the former Irwin B. Schwabe shirt manufacturing plant, a cavernous factory facility that in no fashion resembled a church building. Thanks to the owner's eventual willingness to sell and lots of sweat equity from church members and sister churches in the local Baptist association, that vision is on track to becoming a reality.

Tucker is the founding pastor of New Birth Church, which began in 2003. "I was previously pastoring in Pontotoc for about six years, and then the Lord gave me a vision for this area."

"We started out in a church in Ingomar, the Church of Acts. They would have service to noon, and we'd start our

services at 12:30. We found this building [the current facility] and discovered that Union County Association had it."

The building was the former location of the Clark Street Church in New Albany. "After five months, we purchased this building. It was originally a mission church from First Church, New Albany, back in the 70's," said Tucker. "It was run down, but we came in and fixed it up."

"That's how we became linked with Union County Association. Brother Marvin Cox was the associational mission director (AMD) at the time. We didn't become a part of the association right then, but I stayed personally connected. Then when Brother Charles Rogers became the AMD, we continued that relationship and ultimately joining the association."

When Tucker started the church, it had 35 members. Now the church has over 300 members. With that growth has come the challenge of space. At first, the congregation considered building a new facility because they

owned three quarters of a city block. Because of building codes and setback requirements, a new building wasn't feasible. Every attempt failed. The church brought in architects to help them develop a master plan but discovered they had unbuildable property and were landlocked.

"Then God gave me a vision for the property across the street, about 2006," Tucker stated. "I knew we had to have that old shirt factory. We began to pray for that property. It had been a furniture factory when we first moved out here, and that closed after six or eight months. Then it became a flea market for a while, and a furniture factory again."

The old factory was owned by Larry Roberts. Tucker and Roberts discussed the possibility of a purchase for some time after the furniture factory closed. Before Tucker proceeded, the architects developed another master plan. When approached, Roberts was ready to sell and New Birth

PASTOR SAYS...

L.A. pastor: homosexual activity not always sinful

NASHVILLE (BP) — A Los Angeles-area Southern Baptist pastor has announced that he believes homosexual acts are not always sinful, leading to a split in his church and leaving some Southern Baptists wondering whether the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) will withdraw fellowship from the congregation.

"I recently revealed to the elders that I have changed my stance on homosexuality," Danny Cortez, pastor of New Heart Community Church said in a Feb. 9 sermon posted on YouTube. The sermon gained national attention through a blog post at patheos.com on May 29, and a blog post by Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. on June 2.

In his sermon, Cortez argued that Romans 1 does not condemn all homosexual acts but only those committed in a spirit of violence or unbridled lust. He said modern homosexual relationships are different from the grotesque forms of homosexuality Paul was referencing.

Cortez said he learned about ancient

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Dating gone awry

It's safe to say that the majority of American baby boomers and pre-boomers first met their future spouses in a most traditional western civilization way — face to face. Whether it was a blind date lunch chaperoned by a mutual friend, as in my case (I hated blind dates), in a classroom, at church, on a cross-country flight, during a mission trip, or however, most of us trekked the usual path to courtship, companionship, and matrimony without straying too far off that well-marked path.

There were always the free spirits in every family who had to do things their way, and the system did evolve over the generations. There were lonely hearts ads in newspapers and magazines. Speed dating and a host of other gimmicks came and went. Still, most couples had face to face encounters before deciding whether a person of interest would turn in to a person of special interest.

The young, would-be lovers of today have a much harder time separating the two statuses. Five hundred channels of cable/satellite television, most of which try to get our attention for their advertisements through sexual debauchery, violence, and amoral behavior of all types, have skewed long-held ideas about dating and marriage. Movies are even worse. It's little wonder the whole concept has become such a socially coarse, confusing mess.

Mixed into this modern, wicked brew of inappropriate expectations and dangerous assumptions are Internet dating sites. Not evil in and of themselves, the sites do tend to draw predators and perverts aiming to satisfy their sick desires. That is certainly not the intent of the many legitimate Internet dating sites out there, but our young adults — and even younger people — need to be especially cautious. Web sites that purport to be Christian dating services deserve just as much scrutiny.

According to nbcsandiego.com, a jury in San Diego County, Ca., convicted a man June 23 of raping two

women he enticed through the online dating sites, ChristianMingle.com and Match.com. Match.com is not a Christian dating service, but obviously ChristianMingle.com is such a site. The two sites are not connected.

Sean Banks, 38, was found guilty of a host of crimes arising from his online dating exploits, including rape, rape of an intoxicated woman, two counts of forcible digital penetration, and residential burglary with intent to commit rape. The jury found him not guilty of attempting to dissuade a witness. He faces 40 years to life in prison when he is sentenced.

During his trial, one woman testified that she met Banks through ChristianMingle.com and invited him unseen to come to her apartment. She described how Banks overpowered and sexually assaulted her. Another woman testified how Banks raped her in 2009 after they met on Match.com.

For his part, Banks termed one of the women "crazy" and denied forcing himself on either of the women. He contended at trial that he stopped his sexual advances and departed when the women ordered him to leave.

Prosecutors termed Banks, who used aliases on his dating service accounts, a "very dangerous internet predator," and warned women to be very careful in seeking such dating relationships.

An important lesson to be learned here is that just because a product of any type includes the word, "Christian," in its brand doesn't necessarily mean that extra precautions have been taken or that extra security is in place. Most older people have had enough experiences to understand that fact, but many young adults and teens haven't had time to develop a level of *caveat emptor* that would protect them.

For all of us, it's a dangerous world out there. Some of us will inadvertently fall into one of its many traps. Pray for wisdom, for yourself and for those whose lives have been — and will be to come — changed forever because of such schemes. They will need those prayers.

No issue published on July 3

Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, the newspaper does not publish on the weeks that include Independence Day (July 4) and Christmas Day (December 25). The next issue of The Baptist Record will be dated July 10. Normal deadlines for news and advertisement's will apply to the issue of July 10. The staff of The Baptist Record wishes to express our appreciation for your loyal support of this ministry of information.

See you in Columbus

As the newly elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), I want to call every pastor, every church leader, and every layperson from a Southern Baptist church to join me in Columbus, Ohio, on June 16-17, 2015, for the 2015 annual meeting of the SBC.

As I work with our Order of Business Committee as well as other leaders, I will respectfully request that we dedicate as much time as possible in next year's convention to pray extraordinarily for the next Great Awakening.

I want to call you to Columbus to what could be one of the most significant prayer gatherings in our history.

Yes, we have to conduct business at the SBC annual meeting and we will do it with great diligence, but we will also bring to fruition a year-long emphasis of praying in an extraordinary manner for the next great spiritual awakening in America.

For the next year, I want to humbly request from each church, each national SBC entity, and each state convention that we begin to pray in an over-and-above way for God to move mightily in our lives, our churches and our nation.

Why is this important? Our convention for far too long has bemoaned our decline in baptisms, membership, attendance, and giving. Now is the time for us to take aggressive action by calling out to God together in prayer. At the same time, we must take the needed strategic actions to change our trajectory as a convention of churches.

While we face these critical times, we know God is doing some amazing things right now through Southern Baptists. As we celebrate the glory of God in Columbus, we will also call out to God in urgent desperation.

Why is revival in the church and awakening in the nation so important? I have been greatly convicted that one of the reasons God has placed me as president, for such a time as this, is for the purpose to call His people to what Jonathan Edwards called "extraordinary prayer."

We need extraordinary prayer for the purpose of personal revival, revival in the church, and spiritual awakening in America so that we can see commitment to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) escalated, and accelerate it to its completion in our generation. I believe this should be our heart and our goal.

I have been privileged to catch a glimpse of extraordinary prayer in the Praying Pastors' gatherings in recent months. We have led more than 1,500 pastors in these four gatherings, two of which have been national



Guest opinion
with Ronnie Floyd

gatherings held in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Atlanta areas.

God is doing something very unique right now, and I believe that extraordinary prayer is our number one need. In extraordinary prayer, we recognize that only God can do what is needed in us personally, congregationally, denominational, nationally, and internationally.

We've had a great Conservative Resurgence in the SBC. We are in the midst of a Great Commission resurgence in the SBC. In order for the Great Commission resurgence to be elevated to the proper priority, we need a great spiritual movement and a mighty spiritual awakening, which this nation has not seen in a long time.

Yes, we need to pray now in an extraordinary manner for the next Great Awakening.

Make plans to join us in Columbus. Why should you come? This may be the moment, the time, and God's place to begin the next Great Awakening in the United States. Consider coming in early for Saturday, June 13, to join us in Crossover Columbus, the annual evangelistic outreach preceding each year's SBC annual meeting.

Our team is right now beginning to work on various ways we can begin to connect together via technology. We will use email, Twitter, and Instagram to help all of us be a part of a movement toward Columbus — but greater than that, a movement of praying for the next Great Awakening in America, so that we can see commitment to the Great Commission escalated and accelerated to its completion in our generation.

Please call on your church and others to pray for me daily. I want to represent our Lord, our church, and our Southern Baptist family in the highest manner. I cannot do that without you praying for me daily.

Floyd, on the Web at ronniefloyd.com/blog, was elected to his first term as SBC president during the recently-completed 2014 SBC annual meeting in Baltimore. He is senior pastor of the multi-campus Cross Church, headquartered in Springdale, Ar.

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Christians in Iraq nearing extinction, observers report

MOSUL, Iraq (BP) — Iraqi Christians came under fire again as the bloody campaign of Islamic militants spilled over from Syria into Iraq's northern cities.

An estimated 10,000 fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (the Levant), also known as ISIS and ISIL, have overrun Mosul and other northern Iraqi cities such as Tikrit and Kirkuk, leaving a wave of death and destruction in their path and sending the Iraqi army reeling in panic. ISIS terrorists now have their sights set on the nation's capital city, Baghdad.

Iraqi soldiers, policemen, and government officials captured by ISIS have been summarily executed as have some Chaldean Catholics (ethnic Assyrians) of northern Iraq, according to reports from sources inside the besieged region. Those same sources claim nearly all of the remaining Catholics have fled Mosul.

One million gone

Since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 to overthrow Saddam Hussein, nearly one million Christians have left the country. An estimated 500,000 remained in the northern portion of the country among the Chaldean Catholic community, which has existed there for 2,000 years. Nona said there were "35,000 faithful living in Mosul" in 2003.

"Three thousand were still there in early 2014," Nona said. "Now, probably no one is left there and that is tragic."

Haitham Jazrawi, pastor of Kirkuk Evangelical Church, confirmed the report. "Ninety nine percent of the Christians have left Mosul," he told World Magazine June 10.

The region's Catholics have been under pressure for some time, according to Catholic News Service. The agency quoted an Iraqi Catholic identifying himself only as "Danny," who said Christians "have been the objects of kidnapping, torture and killing by extremists, hoping to extort money from us or to force us to convert to Islam, for several months."

Father Khalil Jaar, who is responsible for aiding Christian refugees who have reached Amman, Jordan, told Catholic News Service that ISIS forces have killed many Christians but also executed Muslims who opposed their efforts to impose strict Sharia (Islamic) law.

"All the people are suffering. But as we are a minority — minority Christians — it is normal to suffer more than others. But even the Muslims are suffering from these fanatic people," Jaar told CNS. "They don't have mer-

cy on anyone, Christian or Muslim. The only answer they have is to kill them."

Dhimma likely

According to the newspaper La Stampa, whose Vatican Insider project reports daily on Catholics around the world, at least one church under construction in Mosul has been demolished and the fourth-century monastery of Mar Benham is in the hands of ISIS militants.

Vatican sources published the e-mail correspondence of a Dominican friar in the area, who told his superior the situation was "critical and apocalyptic."

"They murdered adults and children. Hundreds of bodies have been left in the streets and in the homes, without any mercy," the Dominican friar wrote in his e-mail.

If not killed for their faith, Christians who remain in occupied Mosul will likely see the imposition of a dhimma by ISIS if the group holds onto the city, just as Syrian Christians experienced when the Islamists took control of the ancient Christian city of Raqa in March.

Under dhimma, which is an agreement much like those between Mafia families and legitimate businesses in the West, Islamists agree to offer "protection" to religious minorities in exchange for money.

If the agreement is not signed, subjects are faced with the choice of converting to Islam or facing decapitation by the sword.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported in March that Christians in Raqa, Syria, had signed the agreement, which committed them to a biannual tax of "four gold dinars" — about \$500 per person.

In addition to being required to practice Christianity behind closed doors, Christians in Raqa were told to follow 11 other directives in order to keep the agreement with their Muslim overlords. Among those directives, Christians were prohibited from building new sanctuaries or restoring ones damaged in the civil war there, and they were forbidden from aiding any faction or government opposed to ISIS, Haaretz reported.

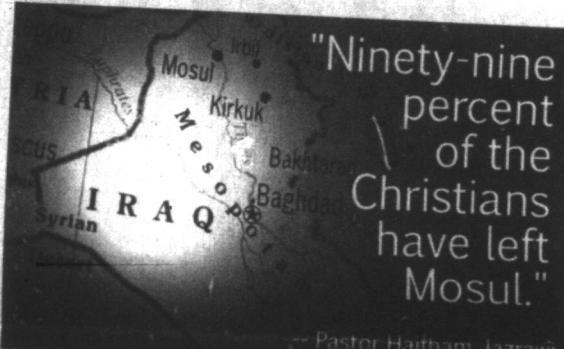
The U.S. State Department condemned the agreement in Raqa as a violation of "universal human rights."

The end game'

Nina Shea, director of the Center for Religious Freedom at Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C., and former chairman of the U.S. Commission on Internation-



NO END IN SIGHT — The already-staggering refugee crisis in the Middle East has been compounded recently by intense fighting in Iraq that has driven thousands of Iraqis from their homes. Christians in Iraq have been especially threatened as radical Islamists take more territory and brutalize the populace. (BP photo)



"Ninety-nine percent of the Christians have left Mosul."

— Pastor Haitham Jazrawi

al Religious Freedom, recently wrote on National Review Online that the situation in northern Iraq shows "the religious cleansing of Christians from Iraq is entering the end game."

"President Maliki is vowing that Iraq's army will regain control, but this may take time. ISIS has controlled parts of Ramadi, the capital of Sunni-Muslim Anbar province, and much of Fallujah for the past six months. When the army does eventually succeed in reversing jihadi control in Mosul, it may be too late for the Christians. Once Middle Eastern Christians flee to the West, they don't return," wrote Shea, a human rights attorney and former director of the Center for Religious Freedom at Freedom House in New York City, the oldest human rights group in the U.S.

This is a profound development for the Christian church, of course, which has had a two-thousand-year-old presence there. But it will have long-term national-security implications for the West. American political leaders have so far failed to distinguish the religious cleansing from its surrounding context of terror and conflict. They overlook the fact that religious pluralism and diversity are among today's casualties."

Radical hatred

ISIS disavows any notion of freedom of religion. The group,

have argued over the succession of Islamic imams (spiritual leaders) for nearly 1,500 years.

Al-Baghdadi's brand of extremist Islam also puts him at odds with the Shiite-controlled Iraqi government, Iran, and clerics such as Iraqi imam Muqtada al-Sadr, who encouraged Shiite Muslims to attack American troops in Fallujah during the Iraq war.

Al-Sadr issued a statement through FARS, an official Iranian news agency, saying he would cooperate with the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to "form peace units to defend the holy places" of both Muslims and Christians.

Nowhere to run

Elijah Abraham, born under a different name to a Shiite family in Baghdad, is now a Christian evangelist who travels to the Middle East often to train Christian pastors. He recently told Baptist Press the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama originally viewed ISIS as an enemy of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and gave the group money and arms to aid its effort to overthrow Assad.

Abraham said the move was a serious miscalculation that has brought harm to Christians.

"ISIS is an extension of Al-Qaeda. With American funds, now ISIS is killing Iraqis and planning to go for Baghdad and Iraqi Shiite shrines to settle an old score," Abraham wrote in an e-mail.

"Since 2009 with President Obama's policies in the Middle East, there has also been a systematic cleansing of Christians in the Middle East."

If ISIS gains the upper hand in the battle, Abraham said the world can expect to see more of what it saw June 15, when ISIS militants released a video reportedly showing the mass execution of captured Shiite Muslim military recruits.

"Christians will be slaughtered in this battle," Abraham said.

Weddings are some of the most stress filled experiences in life. Everybody is uptight. The mothers who want everything to be perfect. The bride who is so nervous that things may not go perfectly. The people who may be kinfolk or just observers who wonder *why is she marrying him or why is he marrying her or why are they getting married*. The photographer who is trying to corral all the various groups in order to get the perfect picture so that he might have a perfect payday. The musicians who are concerned about their part in the program. The minister, who if he's never done a wedding before is scared to death that the wheels will come off. Or the minister, if he is very experienced about weddings knows more than likely some of the wheels are going to come off. He just doesn't know which ones. Everybody's a little tense but after all the planning and preparations and all the cake being delivered and the pictures taken, the wedding will take place and move toward that moment when the heart of the event is before us. Somewhere in the wedding ceremony a man and a woman are confronted with the incredible commitment in love of one life to another to share the journey through the rest of their days.

Sometimes the commitments are repeated after the minister gives them phrases and at other times the minister might make a long promissory statement followed by, "Do you so promise?" The answer given is, "I do." There are times when a minister may do both of those things and even more. But if you, before God and those witnesses present, say "I do," what did you mean? If truth be known, very few people even remember the whirlwind experience of that day, much less thinking very deeply about saying I do and what the meaning of it is. If you are in the process of preparing to say I do, let me make some suggestions of what you are about to say and what it means. Or, for those of you who have already said it and maybe didn't think about it or have forgotten, may I remind you.

For one thing you are declaring that your love is unalterable. The stability of a relationship and the strength of a society are built on the fact that there are some things and some people who are trustworthy and



Directions

With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

What Did You Mean When You Said, "I Do"?

when they tell you something they will do it. Saying "I do love you" does not have a long string of caveats and disclaimers. I love you until you do something that I don't agree with, or I love you until you don't appear to be as beautiful as you were on your wedding day, or I love you until I discover that you are not as smart, gifted, and funny as I thought you were. No. I love you until death do us part and my love will not change with the seasons of the year or the seasons of life.

Secondly, when you say "I do" it is a commitment to another person that is unwavering. In sickness and in health, in poverty as in wealth, whatever is happening, mark it down; I will be there with you. What an amazing thing it is to see a couple that loves each other and makes that kind of commitment, and regardless of what they face — the ravages of war, a debilitating illness, an accident, that changed the personality, or a heartbreak that altered both persons — they reach out and sustain one another in the lowest valleys and smile with each other on the highest mountaintops. Does that ever take place these days? Absolutely.

Years ago during the Vietnam conflict a chaplain who happened to be serving at a hospital at the time here in the States, a place where men were being brought all the way from Southeast Asia to try to rehab and for their bodies to be at least partially put back together

told of two different accounts. One, a man whose war wounds were obviously never going to be fully restored to health, but early one morning, before all the hospital activity actually got underway, a young woman made her way into the bay where a number of hospital beds were, and quietly she walked over to the one where her husband was asleep, probably under slight sedation for his problems. Quietly, she slipped off her wedding ring and laid it beside his pillow and she left. Now the future for him was to be alone. The restoration that he sought would be helped along by hospital personnel but not by an encouraging companion. When he would awake, any dreams that remained in his life would be shattered.

By contrast, that same chaplain told of a man who had been brought there from the battlefields wounded and hurting. And though she lived many miles away, his companion came and found a way to stay near the hospital day after day. Each morning she would arrive to see what small thing she might be able to do to help with breakfast or preparing him to go for rehab or surgery and day after day incremental progress was made. Sure, there were days that there were setbacks but ever those days were turned into hopeful views of tomorrow and the day came when, though not fully restored, she helped him walk out of the hospital and together they walked back into the journey of life.

One last thing that is implied when you say I do, though seldom talked about, is that your love and commitment is unconditional. We live in a world that people are constantly confronted with everything about them is conditional. You can keep your job if you do this. I understand. You can get a good grade in school if you do this. I understand that. You can succeed in athletics if you do this. Gotcha. But somewhere in life there are a few places where there is a commitment that is so deep, so meaningful, so strong, that it overcomes any of the conditions that might be placed on it. You may say to me, "That's unrealistic." And I would say you may be right in that, the only place that you can find that kind of standard and expression that would even be a standard for you to look at is in a relationship with the living God who loves you. He loves you in spite of the fact that He knows every thought that you ever had, every wrongdoing that you ever did, every thing you ever said, every place you've ever been, every sin in your life, and He says to you and me, I love you. He provided for our sins to be forgiven. Nailed them to the cross on His Son, Jesus, and He says I love you. Now when a child of God comes into a marriage relationship with another child of God and they say to each other I love you, not I love you because or I love you when you or if you are, I just love you and my love will be unconditional.

That example set by Jesus to us is the example that we are to set to each other. When that is lived out even on the days when there are setbacks and even on the days when you fail your partner or fail yourself. On the days when you see the highest standard as the finest thing in life you will find that this actually works and makes a difference in you and in the person with whom you share life. What did you mean when you said, "I do"? There are even more realities to it but just to come to an understanding of a few of them and a re-freshening of our relationship with the Lord and each other can make a difference that will change the landscape of life every day.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

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In other College News:

► Mary Jean Padgett, dean of the Mississippi College School of Nursing, plans to retire May, 2015. She has been dean for two decades, and was one of the first of 17 graduates of MC's School of Nursing.

Six motions assigned to Southern Baptist entities

BALTIMORE (BP) — Messengers proposed 17 motions during the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting June 10-11 in Baltimore, six of which were referred to SBC entities for consideration.

The only motion acted on by the convention, adopted by unanimous consent, challenged churches to "pray passionately and regularly for persecuted Christians."

Two motions were referred to the six Southern Baptist seminaries:

- that fees associated with

online seminary classes be removed for students enrolled online, brought by Jerome Taylor of Eastgate Church in Burton, Mi.

- that seminaries survey the views of their faculties and students on tithing and "ensure that our future leaders are taught that the tithe belongs to the Lord," brought by Tim Overton of Halteman Village Church in Muncie, In.

One motion was referred for study to the SBC North American Mission Board in the greater Atlanta area:

- that the SBC Executive Committee and Southern Baptist entities study how churches can be revitalized from plateau or decline, brought by Steven Owensby of First Baptist Church in Enoree, S.C.

One motion was referred to LifeWay Christian Resources of the SBC, headquartered in Nashville:

- that LifeWay reconsider its decision to use the 2011 NIV translation of the Bible in its Sunday School curriculum, brought by Bob Lilly of First Church in Richland, Mo.

One motion was referred to the SBC Committee on Order of Business:

- that music leadership, style, and song selection at future SBC annual meetings express the convention's ethnic diversity, brought by Christopher Burns of Immanuel Church in Louisville, Ky.

One motion was referred to the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, headquartered in Nashville:

- that the SBC president appoint a task force to report on the convention's progress

in pursuing biblical racial reconciliation, and recommend how Southern Baptists "may better reach, make disciples, and raise up leadership from and among diverse racial and ethnic groups in North America," brought by Alan Cross of Gateway Church in Montgomery, Al.

Ten motions submitted by messengers were ruled out of order by President Fred Luter acting on the recommendation of the Committee on Order of Business.

MS POSITIONS

LAKELAND SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH OF MANTACHIE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER. Please send resumes/inquiries to jencumrie@yahoo.com or Lakeland Baptist Church, 5719 River Road, Mantachie, MS 38855

ENON BAPTIST CHURCH IN GRENADE, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR. If interested please submit a resume to Music Search Committee, 2604 Carrollton Road, Grenada, Ms 38901 or e-mail to enonbaptist-church@outlook.com.

FBC OF MAGNOLIA IS SEEKING A PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER. Submit resumes to FBC Magnolia 126 South Clark, Magnolia, MS 39052

MORGAN CHAPEL BAPTIST CHURCH OF STURGIS, 15 MILES FROM STARKVILLE/MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY, IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH. Please send resumes to Wayne Carpenter, 269 Tom St., Sturgis, MS 39769 or to morganan76@yahoo.com.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BROOKLYN, MS IS PRAYERFULLY SEEKING A YEAR ROUND BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR. Please email cover letter, resume and reference list to allen@fbcflowerslaw.net.

STUDENT MINISTER - HEUCKS RETREAT BAPTIST CHURCH of Brookhaven, MS is seeking part-time Student Minister. Send resume to Heucks Retreat Baptist Church 2167 Heucks Retreat Rd., Brookhaven, MS 39061 or email to kparvin@hrbpastor.net

FAIRFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH IN MOSELLE, MS IS LOOKING FOR A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Send resume to 942 Moselle Seminary Rd. Moselle, Ms 39469 or email to fairfield@dayspringtel.net

TRINITY BAPTIST IS PRAYERFULLY LOOKING FOR A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR, BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC AND BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER. We are also looking for an interim Pastor for the moment. Please send resume to Trinity Baptist Church, P.O. Box 328, Petal, Ms. Or email it to trinitypetal@gmail.com

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED AT NEW SIGHT BAPTIST. Please send resumes to: Youth Minister Search Committee, 629 Forest Trail, Brookhaven, MS 39061

SOUTH MCCOMB BAPTIST CHURCH OF MCCOMB, MS IS SEEKING AN INTERIM MUSIC MINISTER to lead our church in a blended style of worship. If you are interested please send e-mail resume to smbo1@bellsouth.net

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19 PEWS FOR SALE, 18' long, \$100.00 each, 601-775-8272

FBC, COOKEVILLE, TN SEEKING A SENIOR PASTOR. A multigenerational, Southern Baptist Church with an average attendance of 650. Position requires an experienced pastor with at least a Master's degree from an accredited Southern Baptist Seminary. Please submit resume before July 31, 2014 to: FBC Cookeville, 18 S. Walnut Ave., Cookeville, TN 38501. E-mail: Searchcommittee@fbc-cookeville.org. Website: www.fbc-cookeville.org.

SEBRENS SIDING www.sebrenhomeimprovement.com. Christian owned Don & Rita Sebren, 601-992-2082. All home improvements, sliding energy efficient windows, metal & shingle roofs, screen & sunrooms, patio covers, decks, room additions, kitchen & bath upgrades.

ELLENDALE BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE MEMPHIS AREA IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR TO PRESCHOOLERS, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH. Resumes should be sent to EBC, Attn: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 487, Ellendale, TN 38029

4 YAMAHA MID RANGE CABINET SPEAKERS WITH BUILT-IN HORN TWEETER, 15" SPEAKERS, 2 peavey woofer speakers, 18", 4 speaker stands. All speakers in like new condition. \$495.00. Florence, MS, home phone 601-845-2310

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Nine resolutions approved by convention messengers

BALTIMORE (BP) — Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) for the first time adopted a resolution on transgender identity, while returning to other issues such as civil rights, gambling, and world hunger for further statements.

All nine resolutions offered June 10 at the SBC's 2014 annual meeting in Baltimore gained approval by unanimous or overwhelming votes. The messengers' actions in about 30 minutes meant a second report scheduled for June 11 was not needed. Greg Belser, senior pastor of Morrison Heights Church in Clinton, served on the Resolutions Committee.

The resolution on transgender identity came in response to recent gains in state legislatures, the federal executive branch, public schools and the wider culture by advocates for recognizing a distinction between gender and biology.

In the resolution, messengers affirmed that "gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one's self-perception." It expressed love for transgender people and invited them to trust in Jesus.

In addressing some issues messengers had spoken to at various times in the past, 2014 messengers also:

- Commemorated the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Civil Rights Act and reaffirmed the SBC's 1965 call for "peaceful compliance with laws assuring equal rights for all."

- Reaffirmed its "long-standing opposition to government sponsorship of gambling."

- Urged Southern Baptists to support the newly rebranded Global Hunger Relief initiative.

- Condemned "predatory payday lending" and urged churches to offer financial stewardship instruction and skills training for people inside and outside their congregations.

- Reaffirmed "the sufficiency of biblical revelation over subjective experiential explanations to guide one's understanding of the truth about heaven and hell" in an apparent response to the recently released movie, Heaven Is for Real, and similar books and films.

- Encouraged Southern Baptists to back the creation of Christ-centered elementary and secondary schools and Christian homeschooling systems, supported those who follow God's direction by taking part in public schools, and urged policies that "maximize parental choice."

- Affirmed "the calling of pastors who revitalize churches as needful as the calling of pastors to plant churches."

- Thanked God and all those who helped with this year's meeting.

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Vacation Bible School



ECRU CHURCH, ECRU: June 2 – 6; Greg Lassett, pastor.



The children of **SILVER CREEK CHURCH, MCCOMB,** collected pantry supplies for Dickerson Place of the Baptist Children's Village as part of their VBS offering.



CASH CHURCH, LENA: June 8 – 12; 30 children with three professions of faith.



BRANDON CHURCH, BRANDON: Week of June 9; 323 children participating.

In other VBS News:

► **Immanuel Church, Greenwood:** July 7 – 11, 6 – 9 p.m.; supper provided; music, crafts, and games.

► **Bellevue Church, Pontotoc County:** July 7 – 11, 6 – 8:30 p.m., Bible study and activities.

6:30 – 8:30 p.m., ages 3 and up. Tommy Inmon, pastor; Margie Douglas, VBS director.

► **First Church, Shannon:** July 6 – 11; supper, 5:15 – 6 p.m.; 6 – 8:30 p.m., Bible study and activities.



WEST HEIGHTS CHURCH, PONTOTOC: June 2 – 6; enrollment, 472, with 18 professions of faith; offering went to build a longhouse in Malaysia through Missions Mobilization of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. They also collected items for the Baptist Children's Village. David Hamilton, pastor.



SAULS VALLEY, MONTICELLO: June 9 – 13, with commencement June 15; Friday fun day with pizza and water slide.

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Revivals & Homecomings



CONCORD CHURCH, BENTON-TIPPAH ASSOCIATION, held their spring revival Apr. 6–9 with the revival team from Blue Mountain College. Shown are Luke Parmer, Derek Hunter, Andrew Chasteen, and pastor Robert E. Walker.

► **LUCIEN CHURCH, FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION:** Revival, June 28–29; Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon service; Gene Douglas and Marvin Howard, speakers; Pat and Roy Doughty, music; Carroll Walker, pastor.

RISE UP & REACH OUT THROUGH BIBLE STUDY CONFERENCES

JULY 12, 2014 AUGUST 9, 2014

8:30 a.m. – noon

NORTH GREENWOOD BC
GREENWOOD

Dr. Wayne Marshal

8:30 a.m. – noon

PETAL-HARVEY BC,
PETAL

Dr. Larry LeBlanc

ALL PASTORS, SUNDAY SCHOOL/SMALL GROUP DIRECTORS, PRESCHOOL, CHILDREN, STUDENT AND ADULT BIBLE STUDY LEADERSHIP PLEASE COME TO THIS EVENT WE HAVE PLANNED FOR YOU. BELOW IS WHAT WE WILL OFFER.

KEYNOTE MESSAGE

Importance of a healthy teaching and healthy outreach through our SundaySchool and Small Groups to your community.

***A new free tool offered to MS churches
by your MS Baptist Convention Board ***

MAPPING CENTER

We will assist your church to cast a clear and powerful VISION with filtered lists, maps, and Neighborhood Prayer lists. You may go to www.mappingcenter.com to preview the new tool/services we are offering.

MY HOPE AMERICA

We continue with Billy Graham's emphasis to move our churches forward in 2014. We will share latest resources that will be available for your church.

Preschool, Children, Student, and Adult Leadership Topics are:

Session 1: Healthy Reaching: Outreach, Ministry and Building Relationships in your Bible Study through Sunday School and Small Groups

Session 2: Healthy Teaching: Reaching Techniques for Bible Study through Sunday School and Small Groups

Pastors & General Officers Leadership Topics are:

Session 1: Healthy Reaching: Me & the Church; Me & the World/Others

Session 2: Healthy Leaders: God & Me; Me & My Family (Personal)

JUNE 1 you may register online at www.mbcbs.org

For more information

743-651-2211 ext 1903
or email info@mbcbs.org

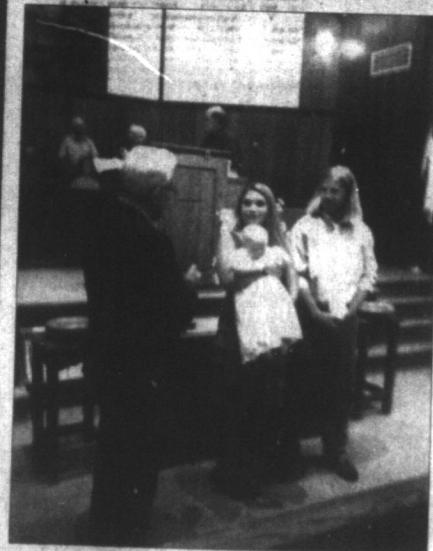
Just for the Record



Hailey Kent,
Abbi Upchurch,
McKenzie
Parrish, Lexi
Melton, Mack-
enzie Mont-
fort, Brianna
Montfort, and,
front, Isaiah
Melton, from
**NEW HOPE
CHURCH,
STARKVILLE,**
attended Camp
Lake Forrest
Ranch, Macon.



**SUNFLOWER
CHURCH, SUN-
FLOWER**, sent
eight members on
a nine day mis-
sion trip to Red
Lodge, Montana,
to assist in build-
ing a mission
hub for Legacy of
Faith Ministries
and apartment to
house temporary
relocating mis-
sionaries. Elbert
McKnight, pastor.



GRACE CHURCH, VICKSBURG, held a baby dedication June 8. Shown are pastor H. Bryan Abel, Marcy and David Jones, and baby Anabelle Grace Jones.

GILLSBURG CHURCH, GILLSBURG, rec-
ognizes the top four winners in the Youth Bible
Challenge: Collin Reid, Lauren Williams, Aaron
McKay, and Jenna Lee. Austin Bean, leader.

Staff Changes



HILL POINTE CHURCH, RAYMOND has called David Watts as minister of music and associate pastor. Shown are pastor Jerry File and Watts.



CENTER RIDGE CHURCH, CARMICHAEL COMMUNITY, QUITMAN, has called Mark Carney as pastor. He is shown with his wife Tammy.



GOODWATER CHURCH, MAGEE, has called Michael Giles as pastor effective June 29. He is shown with his wife Ellen and sons Clayton and Creston.

Clarification

On page five of the June 19 issue of The Baptist Record, the byline on the First Person commentary was inadvertently omitted. The author is Bard Johnston. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

MACEDONIA CHURCH, LEE COUNTY, has called Dexter Griggs as music director, effective May 18. He is shown with his wife, Caroline, who plays organ and piano. Terry Faulkner, pastor.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God
in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins
and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the
grave to forgive my sins and to restore
my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship
with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church
for spiritual guidance.

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QAW IKT KDL NVRDP; RA RN BQCSTB

KD NYL AQEEQNY XQIA NK XK PKKX,

KF NK XK LGRB? NK AQGL BRSL, KF NK

XLANFKI RN?

BTWL ARH: DRDL

Clue: Y = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 5:36

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004. © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JANUARY 2014

MEMORIALS

Mrs. Sara Peyton
Ms. Dian Smith
Troy Priest
Adult Men's Class,
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Mr. Willard Randolph
Tom & Judy Woodward
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Mrs. Ouida Raulins
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Wiley Reid
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Mr. Randy F. Rogers
Mrs. Earline Rogers
Live Oaks Ladies Golf Assoc.
Julia Earline Rogers
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Robert Scott
Mr. & Mrs. Ron K. Phillips
Lavon Scarlock
Crystal Springs Floral Club
Mr. Oliver Sides
Mrs. Glenda C. Fry
Mrs. Kristen Sisco
Couples III SSC, Arlington BC
Mrs. Etta Smiley
Mr. & Mrs. Malcolm Smiley
Dennis Smith
Cascilla BC
Janet Smith
Mr. & Mrs. Larry R. Sasser
Judge Mike Smith
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas W. Brock
Mr. & Mrs. Rex Cowart
Tywanna Smith
Mr. & Mrs. Larry R. Sasser
Graham Brooke Snider
Ms. Deborah Y. Snider
Rev. David Snowden

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Cecil & Penny Washington
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Jerry W. Wilson
Mr. & Mrs. Larry A. Cooley
Mary Frances Wilson
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Alice Ruth Yates
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Crisis of Faith: When Pride Turns to Greed • Ezekiel 28:1-5, 11-19

In the garden of Eden the lie of Satan was to deify man and to humanize God. "Did God say...?" was the serpent's question (ESV). Near the Bible's conclusion the identity of the serpent was confirmed, "And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." Revelation 20:2 (ESV). In other words, Satan proposed to Adam and Eve that God was capable of lying and had been dishonest with man. Satan then tempted that humans could be like God. He even used the exact phrase, "You will be like God," Genesis 3:5 (ESV). Adam and Eve bought it, and we've been buying this lie ever since.

Our novelists and filmmakers love the theme of the superhuman. Whether caused by mutations, GammaRays, cosmic rays, or aliens, we imagine that any of us could be more than human. Most of that is just fantasy and an escape from reality, yet many believe that they are truly more powerful than reality. Ezekiel delivered the word of the Lord to the Prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:1-2 "Because your heart is proud, and you

have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas, yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god...' (ESV). The Prince of Tyre believed that he had created his own wealth and established his own kingdom.

The Lord alone, however, gives authority and power. Deuteronomy 8:18

r e a d s

"You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his

covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day." (ESV). The Lord asked the Prince of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:9, "Will you still say, 'I am a god, in the presence of those who kill you, though you are but a man, and no god, in the hands of those who slay you?'" (ESV). Anyone

who thinks he is a god will certainly be surprised when he meets the one true God. One is not much of a god if he cannot prevent his own death.

Though some royalty may foolishly consider themselves a god, all of us are tempted to be prideful and to feel superior to other people. God hates our haughty eyes, according to Proverbs 6:16.

He hates when we look down on others, whether because of their clothing, address, race, employment status, dis-

ability, income, or automobile. Have you ever been stopped at a traffic light, looked at the person in the next lane driving a 25-year-old beat up car, and felt superior to them? The Bible says God hates that in each of us. Hate is a strong word, meaning to detest, abhor,

or reject. May I hate in me what God hates in me.

Isaiah 57:15 reads, "For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite,'" (ESV). God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. We must humble ourselves before Him.

The Lord Jesus paid for our sin of pride. The one person on the planet who had the right to look down on us, instead came down here for us, to pay for our sins on the cross. In the real world people sin and need forgiveness. Jesus offers that now. Psalm 100:3 instructs, "Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture," (ESV). He is God and we are not. Once that is settled everything else will fall into place.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.

God is Wise • Proverbs 2:1-6; 3:5-7

In the early 1970's, Tom Elliff, President of the International Mission Board, spoke at the European Baptist Convention held in Interlaken, Switzerland. As an attendee I remember his message and challenge regarding prayer. However, what I recall most is his comment regarding the use of the word 'always.' He stated there was really one time you could use the word 'always' and it is in the following way: God always speaks through His Word (Rom 11:33).

Are your decisions made through searching the Scriptures and prayer or do you depend on your own logic and abilities? God's wisdom and the "wisdom" of men are not the same. For example, Paul wrote, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart'... For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 1:18, 19, 25; see also Rom 12:16b).

What is the definition of wisdom? Wisdom is the 'know how', the implementation of the knowledge of God's truth. The truth of God's Word is over any experience or personal opinion. James 3:17 (NASB) gives us a descrip-

tion of wisdom: "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy." It is available to every believer, but it is our responsibility to seek after it and to ask for it (James 1:5).

This is exactly why Proverbs 2:1-6 instructs us to value wisdom and pursue it above everything else. When God appeared to Solomon and asked him what shall I give you, Solomon replied "Give me now

w i s d o m
and knowl-
edge . . ."

(1 Chron
1:7-13).
Is it any
wonder he
would in-
struct oth-
ers to do
the same:

making your ear attentive, inclining your heart, call out for insight, raise your voice for understanding, seek it like silver, and search as for hidden treasures. And when you do, the benefits to this prized possession will be: you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God (vs. 5). It is vital we remember the source of perfect wisdom.

Additionally, Scripture tells us those who are in Christ have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Wisdom doesn't come automatically; there should be a quest for wisdom as we study and apply the Scriptures to our lives. Growth in wisdom is a process, see Psalm 119:97-98. We are to get wisdom (Prov 4:7). How can you get wisdom? In the book, *A Woman Who Reflects the Heart of Jesus*, Elizabeth George offers the following: Desire Wisdom (Prov 9:13-14);

Pray for
w i s d o m
(Prov 2:3,
5); Seek
w i s d o m
(Prov. 2:4)
and Trust
God's wis-
dom (Prov
3:5-6).

God is
all-wise.

He knows what you are thinking and what is going to happen—E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G. "His omniscience undergirds His wisdom" (The Wisdom of God, bible.org). Therefore, since God is all-wise and all-knowing should we not trust Him completely? Nestled in the text of Proverbs 3:5-6 are two words: TRUST HIM! This means you do not trust your own understanding or the

opinion of others, especially when it contradicts Scripture. Trusting Him means: Totally Relying Upon my Savior's Truth. When we trust God's wisdom we have to be willing to wait upon His timing and He will make your paths straight—His promise.

Finally, there is a warning, "Be not wise in your own eyes" (vs. 7). This is called pride. Instead we are to humble ourselves before the Lord (James 4:6, 10). This is our Father's invitation and when we do, we will understand 'The fear of the LORD'—reverence and humble submission. Begin today to study the Proverbs, one per day. Pursue wisdom, trust Him, gain a heart of wisdom, and your decisions will demonstrate wise behavior.

Search the Scriptures, pray, and then sing this hymn prayerfully . . . "The matchless wisdom of His ways that mark the path of righteousness; His word a lamp unto my feet, His Spirit teaching and guiding me. And O the mystery of the Cross, that God should suffer for the lost, so that the fool might shame the wise, and all the glory might go to Christ" (Second verse from The Perfect Wisdom of Our God, written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend).

Leathers is a member of First Church, Madison.

GROWTH

cont. from p. 1

purchased the property, as is, for \$100,000.

There were environmental issues. Asbestos had to be removed before anything could be torn down, and over 50,000 square feet of building had to be torn down before any new work could begin.

"Banks didn't want to touch that property, because they knew what was in there," Tucker said, but when the church paid to have the asbestos removed, Roberts deleted the cost of removal from the total purchase price.

"We tore down what we needed to tear down, salvaged about 46,000 bricks, and sold those to one person," the pastor said.

The church began construction in February of this year,

starting with leak repairs on the roof. "Many people thought I was just wasting money," Tucker said, "but it's turned out."

The building has been gutted, interior walls have been erected, and other improvements are in process. When complete, the sanctuary will seat over 500, with 21 classrooms and an administrative suite.

"Several churches from the association came and basically did

all the framing for us," Tucker said. "It was led by Brother Billy Matkins from Ingomar Church. Other pastors and churches from the association showed up to help, too."

Churches helping with the work included Ingomar, Harmony, Pleasant Ridge, and others, "but Brother Billy headed it up and stuck with it," Tucker said, "sticking with it day and night, using folks from our church, too."

It was a great fellowship as well as a working relationship. It was a blessing to our church, and saved us some money."

The target date for dedication of the new facility is the second Sunday in August, which is the eleventh anniversary of the church's start. "We hope we'll be in a week prior, so we can get used to working everything. We don't want to be just going in when all the company gets here."

Hopeful Faith : Hope of New Freedom • Ezekiel 34:2-6, 11-16, 22-24

The Southern Kingdom of Judah had just fallen. The Temple in Jerusalem was ransacked and destroyed. Many Jews were taken captive to Babylon. Yet God proclaimed through His prophet Ezekiel that He would restore Israel someday. Though they were captive, they would one day be free.

Two-hundred and thirty-eight years ago this past week our forefathers declared their independence. To appreciate our independence, we must remember its cost. The thirteen colonies were controlled by Great Britain, and, though they paid plenty of taxes, they had no political voice. On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress approved a resolution declaring their independence from Great Britain. The resolution was written by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman.

That resolution was our Declaration of Independence. Its second sentence sums up its meaning and value, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Our Declaration of Independence meant that our ancestors were no longer dependent

on Great Britain; it also meant that America chose to be self-determined, self-reliant, and self-accountable. America declared that she was no longer dependent upon Great Britain for military protection, laws, or for trade.

Our nation's independence cost tens of thousands of lives and millions of dollars in the Revolutionary War. Independence is always costly. Independence is the opposite of dependence.

If you are independent, then you do not depend on anyone or anything. Have you declared your independence?

That means you are no longer dependent on parents, relatives, or friends, that you are self-determined, self-reliant, and self-accountable.

Are you dependent on alcohol, drugs, uncontrolled spending, or pornography? Are you obsessed with a particular recreation or person, or with obtaining power or status? If you are dependent on anything or anyone, you are not independent. Jesus said

that whom He freed would be free indeed (John 8:36 HCSB). Jesus paid the highest price for your independence- Himself (Acts 20:28 HCSB). 1 Corinthians 6:20 reads, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body," (HCSB).

Jesus did not die on the cross to pay for your independence so that you may become dependent again. God's desire for you is freedom, so that you

may serve Him. Paradoxical, yes; but freedom for us only comes from serving the Lord. Psalm

100:3 reminds us, "Acknowledge that the LORD is God. He made us, and we are His—His people, the sheep of His pasture," (HCSB). The Lord spoke through his prophet Ezekiel that He desired for Israel to be a free nation serving Him and knowing Him. God said in Ezekiel 33 that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he would turn and live.

Luke 9:24 states, "For whoever

wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will save it," (HCSB). God made us to serve Him. We can only be free when we are in His service. We possess political freedom, but life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness only come from Jesus (John 14:6, Isaiah 61:1 and Romans 4:7). To be self-determined, self-reliant, and self-accountable, we must deny ourselves, let Christ determine our ways, rely solely on Christ, and be accountable to Christ Jesus. The Scripture is clear, our individual independence only comes from dependence on The Lord.

The war for independence still rages in the lives of millions in America who are politically free, yet enslaved to sin and ruin. As with the nation of Israel, God requires repentance from each of us. God's way is simple—only when we repent of our sins can we be free from sin's enslavement. Just as America won her independence from their oppressors, the Lord has won our independence from oppressing sin. Declare you independence today. Depend on Jesus to be independent from sin.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.

God is Faithful • Hebrews 6:17-20; 10:19-23

Essentially there are two oaths administered for the office of the Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The first one is a Constitutional Oath and the most familiar. "I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God." The second oath is the Judicial Oath which is found in the Judiciary Act of 1789. Then there are occasions when combined version is used. Why are oaths given? The answer is: "Men must swear to one greater than themselves" (Heb. 6:16).

God has also sworn to an oath. "By Myself I have sworn . . ." and because God is perfect, He must swear by Himself. This passage of Scripture found in Genesis 22:16-18, is a reaffirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant first mentioned in Genesis 12:1-3. The writer of Hebrews also wrote, "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself," (Heb 6:13 NASB).

The oath is actually two parts. First, there is the promise of Abraham's many descendants, a nation. Second, is the promise of a single descendant—Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). God is faithful and His past faithfulness is our future hope and security.

The Certainty of God's Promise is the sub-title in the ESV Bible for the passage found in Hebrews 6:13-20. Three times the word promise is used in this section.

"With God, of course, his promise is just as reliable as his oath—he cannot lie because his whole nature

is truthful. But because he wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to any who seek his help, he condescended to add to his promise a solemn oath. So by these two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, the readers of this letter, and we who share it with them, are greatly encouraged to take hold of the hope offered. Since God cannot lie

to us, and actually confirmed his promise with an oath, let us as the writer says, be greatly encouraged" (Hebrews Commentary, www.raystedom.org).

Our great encouragement is realized when we take hold of the hope which is set before us. This hope is found in Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of God's promise (Gen 3:15). Only the high priest was allowed to go behind the veil in the temple, but when Christ died on the cross the veil was ripped in two thereby giving the believer direct access into the throne room. This is also

referred to as the Melchizedek ministry of Christ (Gen 14:17-24; Heb 7:1-28). He is King and He is the High Priest, forever, seated at the right hand of God the Father, making intercession (Hebrews 10:19-21). We have confidence to enter into the holy of holies because of the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19). He is Hope (Col 1:5, 27; 1 Tim. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:13-16). He is the anchor of the soul.

The anchor was a metaphor for stability and it was unmovable. The anchor, Jesus Christ, holds us steady in the midst of the storm. He is the one who brings us comfort, sustains us through trials and temptations, and gives us strength to endure until the end.

Additionally, as we see in Hebrews 10:19-23, we are to have an unwavering confidence because of God's faithfulness. It is in His provision through Christ that we have confidence, an unwavering ability to be confident, and we have a great high priest. Then notice the phrases, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" and "let us hold fast the confession of our hope," indicating it is a privilege and a choice. God never falters in what He says or promises. God is always faithful!

And this is the reason why we sing, "Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow—Blessings all mine with then thousand beside! Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!" (Great is Thy Faithfulness, written by Thomas O. Chisholm, third stanza)

Leathers is a member of First Church, Madison.

HOMOSEXUAL

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by immersing himself in "homosexual literature." He also explained that his son is ho-

mosexual, and said his own change of mind led to the "most meaningful moment" he has ever had with his son.

Some New Heart members believed Cortez's position is unbiblical and thought he

should be terminated, a letter from Cortez posted at patheos.com said. According to Cortez, the congregation voted May 18 not to dismiss him. Instead it opted to become a "Third Way" church that will "agree to dis-

agree and not cast judgment on one another," Cortez wrote.

Earlier this month, a group of church members who believe homosexuality is unbiblical reportedly separated from New Heart.

Though the SBC cannot discipline a church, it can withdraw fellowship from a congregation and has done so on three occasions, all in response to churches' affirmations of homosexuality.

Just for the Record



NORTH MORTON CHURCH, SCOTT ASSOCIATION, ordained Brian Massey and Jessie Prestige to the gospel ministry. Shown are Massey, pastor Gary Wyatt, and Prestige.



BUNKER HILL CHURCH, COLUMBIA, held a baby dedication Father's Day. Shown, from left, are Jeremiah Christopher Walden, Toby Dale Martin, Jack Anthony Moree, Harper Laine Welch, Merritt Francille Wilks, and Will Darcy Jordan.



CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, sent nine GA's to Garaywa Camp and Conference Center. Kristi Watts, leader; Hal Hatten, pastor.



CEDAR GROVE CHURCH, COLUMBIA, recognizes deacons Chick Bourne for 30 years of service and Gary Arthur for 31 years of service. Shown are Bourne, pastor Todd Sumrall, and Arthur.



CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, made a summer trip to Lewis Smith Lake, Arley, Ala., where they studied David Platt's Secret Church: The Body of Christ.

In other Church News:

► **Enon Church, Grenada**, is having a gospel singing June 28, 6 p.m., featuring Unveiled.

► **Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa**, is hosting The Hoppers in concert June 28, 6 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. Tickets, \$12 in advance; \$15 at the door. For information, call (228) 475-2938.

► **Siloam Church, West Point**, is hosting Southern Flair in concert June 29, 5:30 p.m.

► **Crane Creek Church, Hancock County**, is hosting its annual 4th of July celebration at the Necaise Crossing Ball Park, intersection of Hwy. 603 and Hwy. 53. Fireworks, The Culpeppers, Daves Highway, Dustie Dunn, and David A.R. White. Concessions Free.

► **Sallis Church, Sallis**, is hosting a 5th Sunday Night Singing June 29, 5 p.m., featuring The Johnson Family. Finger foods. Love offering.



STEELE CHURCH, SCOTT ASSOCIATION, recently held a baby dedication. Shown are Joseph, Lexi, and Marcieray Freeny and former pastor Reggie Williams.



PLEASANT HILL CHURCH, COLUMBUS, honored Claudine Lewark for her 32 years of service as pianist. Shown are Lewark, Wylie Dilmore, and pastor Bill Hurt.



HIGH HILL CHURCH, NESHOBIA COUNTY, recognized graduating senior Whitney Billings with a Bible May 25.